

Katharine (Kate) McKee



Katharine (Kate) McKee, 66, who devoted her career to developing and implementing programs to improve the lives of the poor worldwide, especially women, died in Bellevue, Washington, on August 18, 2022, from a ruptured brain aneurysm. Katharine had moved back to her home state in 2020, after more than 20 years in the Washington, D.C., area. Katharine was a pioneer in two fields – community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and microenterprise finance – that are now cornerstone strategies in the United States and internationally for helping people escape poverty. Her passion for international development and women’s issues flourished at the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, from which Katharine received a

Master’s degree in Public and International Affairs, with distinction, in 1978. Upon graduation from Princeton, she became a Senior Program Officer for the Ford Foundation in Nigeria and New York, focusing on issues of development finance, asset-building, and women’s economic empowerment.

At Ford and as Associate and Policy Director for North Carolina’s Center for Community Self-Help from 1986 to 1998, Katharine helped foster the CDFI industry’s evolution into a multibillion-dollar sector focused on financing community development in the United States. Subsequently, as Director of the Office of Microenterprise Development at the U.S. Agency for International Development (from 1998 until 2006), she helped solidify USAID’s leadership position as the largest bilateral donor in microfinance, supporting more than 5 million borrowers per year worldwide.

From 2006 to 2017, Katharine was a senior professional at CGAP (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor), where she led initiatives on pathways to sustainable livelihoods, consumer protection, responsible finance, savings, and client-focused financial services. During the last two years of her professional life, she worked to establish the global Partnership for Economic Inclusion and to pioneer yet another innovative international development strategy – graduation – that focuses on delivering a suite of support services and financial products to the world’s extreme poor.

Katharine grew up in Seattle, leaving to earn a bachelor’s degree Summa Cum Laude from Bowdoin College in 1976 in German and Politics.

Katharine's friends and colleagues remember her as a proud feminist, gender equality advocate, and, especially, as a mentor for her junior colleagues. She was warm and generous of spirit and time, but suffered neither fools nor jerks. The word cloud associated with the many tributes that poured in after her death also highlights trust, advisor, wisdom, facilitator, engagement, compassion, and consensus builder.

In her free time, Katharine was an avid reader, gardener, and tennis player. She had an encyclopedic knowledge of flowers. On the last hike of her life, she dazzled her friends with her ability to identify native flower species on Mt. Rainier. She is survived by her husband of 36 years, David McGrady, and her two children, Anna and Charlie, Charlie's wife Siena Tenisci, and her first grandchild, Emory.

David, Anna and Charlie invite all of Katharine's family and friends to come and celebrate a life well-lived and loved. To reflect the joy she brought to the world around her, floral attire and bright colors are encouraged. A reception will follow. In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to a charity of the donor's choice.

Friday, November 18, 2022, 2pm

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

9601 Cedar Lane

Bethesda, MD

The celebration will also be livestreamed on Cedar Lane's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/c/CedarLaneUnitarianUniversalistChurch>.